



Water Quality NewsFlash

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Mercury – OEHHA issues more warnings – The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is proposing to issue advisories concerning elevated levels of mercury in some fish in the lower Cosumnes River (Sacramento County) and lower Mokelumne River (San Joaquin County). The OEHHA Director said, “Women of childbearing age and children should sharply restrict the number and types of fish they eat from those rivers, as well as nearby creeks and sloughs.” See: http://www.oehha.ca.gov/public_info/press/cosmokepress0406.html Interestingly, neither waterway appears on the current (2002) 303(d) list or on the proposed 2006 list as impaired by mercury. Mercury pollution of waterways and bioaccumulation in fish is ubiquitous in U.S. waterways and is the major cause of fish consumption advisories. California fish consumption advisories, mostly mercury-related, are posted at: http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/so_cal/index.html

As more waterways are sampled, more mercury contamination is likely to become apparent, resulting in advisories from OEHHA. The State Board’s *Water Quality Control Policy For Developing California’s Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List* includes fish advisories as one of the criteria for identifying and listing impaired waterways. Consequently, we can expect that over time more waterways will be placed on the section 303(d) list because of health advisories. The total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) made necessary by these listings will potentially require reductions in mercury loadings from urban runoff. Listing policy: http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/tmdl/docs/ffed_303d_listingpolicy093004.pdf

Ocean Plan – State posts revised version – The California Ocean Plan (OP) establishes water quality standards (WQS) for the ocean in the same way that the Regional Board Basin Plans, along with the *California Toxics Rule*, establish WQS for bays and inland waters. The latest set of OP revisions was approved by U.S. EPA in February. The changes: (1) introduce a procedure for determining when pollutants in a discharge have “reasonable potential” to exceed WQS and therefore must have effluent limitations (not currently applicable to storm water); (2) change the name of some of the Areas of Special Biological Significance; and, (3) add water contact bacterial standards. <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/plnspols/docs/oplans/oceanplan2005.pdf>

California Water and Land Use Partnership – Land use and water quality education – CA WALUP (formerly the CA NEMO Partnership) is a collaboration of various local, state, and federal agencies in California that provides assistance to local governments to improve land use planning with the goal of protecting and improving water quality. Partners include the California Coastal Commission, State Water Resources Control Board, OEHHA, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, and others. The group has produced a series of fact sheets including one on low impact development: <http://ca-walup.usc.edu/> OEHHA has also been working on a related project to help communities determine impervious surface coefficients for various types of development: <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/ecotox/isc031006.html>

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, fkrieger@msn.com with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>